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The Attitude of Organized Religion Toward Government

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*Address delivered at the Poughkeepsie Civic Forum,
Poughkeepsie, N. Y., April 3, 1938*

IT was with great willingness, and even with eagerness, that I accepted your invitation to participate in the Forum this afternoon. The subject that you propose for discussion is one of very grave interest and of the utmost importance—for all governments and for all religions—and it is of special importance for the Church which I represent. Not only does the subject being discussed appeal to me, but the method of discussion pleases me. We are explaining our positions, not debating them. We are attempting to clarify issues, not to intensify discords.

My twenty minutes in this Forum is at once easier and more difficult than the minutes of the two other speakers. My role, moreover, is different because my Church is different. The Jewish Doctor represents a religion and a race that has kept its identity through all the centuries of known history. But I represent a religion that includes all known races and glories in the fact that it embraces them all. The Protestant

Doctor represents a religious tradition that gathers under the single term of Protestant some three hundred denominations or groups that preserve their complete identity and do not accept a centralized authority. While I represent a Church that insists upon the acceptance of a single code of doctrine and morality in every nation and that is centralized on a supranational basis. My task, then, is easier because it is simplified by many and repeated official pronouncements through many centuries. It is more difficult because these pronouncements all have an international bearing and require specific treatment.

THE CATHOLIC ATTITUDE TOWARD GOVERNMENT

There are certain fundamental propositions about the Catholic attitude toward government that I must necessarily lay before you, and I trust you may bear with me while I present them as briefly as I can.

The whole Catholic doctrine is derived from the proposition enunciated by Jesus when He was asked: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar?" His answer has been the Catholic guide: "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that *are* Cæsar's, and to God the things that *are* God's."

Building upon this maxim, the Catholic makes a division of human society as he does of the human person. As in the person there is a body and a soul, the one material, the other spiritual, so in human society there is a material part and a spiritual part, each of these supreme in its respective function, but both joined and both cooperating for the welfare of society. In all material, temporal matters, the civil society under its legitimate government, is supreme. "Render unto Cæsar the *things* that are Cæsars." In spiritual matters, those that affect the union of man with God, those that lead man to his final destiny with God, the religious society must be supreme. "Render unto God the *things* that are God's."

Now I must amplify this fundamental position by a statement with which many of you will undoubtedly disagree and which you may consider arrogant, but which, nevertheless, must be made if I am fully to present the Catholic attitude. The Catholic Church considers itself the true religious society of which I have spoken. It believes that it, and it alone, has received the full mandate from Christ. It affirms that it is supreme in spiritual matters, but it recognizes at the same time that the civil society, through its legitimate government, is supreme in all material functions. The Catholic Church, as a religious society, then, concedes to every Government the things that belong to Government, and wishes, moreover, to dwell in peace and justice and concord with every Government, not interfering with Government, not injecting itself into the civil affairs of Government, but demanding that Government should not interfere in its Divine commission and should not inject itself into its spiritual affairs.

Coming down to a closer determination of the relation between the Catholic Church and Government, I point out that the Catholic Church, through history, has existed parallel with every form of Government, and has survived every form of Government. It outlived the Roman Emperors and tyrants, it remained when feudalism perished, it saw the downfall of monarchies, it is vigorous with the supremacy of democracies, and it is battling with dictatorships whether they be in Russia or Mexico or Italy or Germany or Spain. The form of Government that is freely adopted by a free people, such as we are in the United States, or that a people accepts for itself, be it in Russia or in Germany, is a function of civil society, of the citizens or subjects *as* citizens or subjects. The exercise of that Government, however, becomes the concern of the Catholic Church when, and if, that Government invades the Divine rights of the Church as a religious

society and makes it impossible for the citizen or subject to render unto God the things that are God's.

CATHOLIC CHURCH REQUIRES FREEDOM OF GOVERNMENT

What, then, does the Catholic Church require of Government, no matter what form that Government may assume? It requires freedom, and demands this freedom as a right, to fulfil the mission entrusted to it by Christ. It demands that Government do not attempt to control or modify its dogmatic and moral teachings. It demands that Government do not interfere with the administration of its Sacraments or its spiritual exercises of Divine worship. It asserts its liberty to administer itself as a spiritual and religious society, as an organized body that is both national and supranational. It holds, as its prerogative, the duty to preserve the Faith and the morality and the spiritual aspirations of all its members, whether these be lay or clerical. And, when it believes that the soul of any one of its members is endangered, it holds as its duty the defense of that member or that group of members.

What, then, does the Catholic Church contribute to Government, no matter what the form of Government? It offers what George Washington wished when he asserted: "Religion and morality are the props of society and the pillars of the State." It offers its full cooperation in building up a citizenry that is spiritual-minded and law-abiding. It aspires to assist Government in every movement for the betterment of social conditions, for economic reform, for the abolition of class bitterness, for the advancement of education and the sciences and the arts, for prosperity, for the preservation of peace and order within the jurisdiction of the Government, and for the promotion of peace in world affairs. In a word, the Church offers to the civil Government all its spiritual influence, all

the civic loyalty of itself and its members, all its practical idealism, all its patriotism and allegiance. The Catholic Church strives always to render unto Government the things that are Government's.

Between the spiritual powers of the Church and the civil powers of Government there are possible disagreements and conflicts. It may be that Government accuses the Church of political meddling, and the Church accuses the Government of spiritual invasion. Then, there must be an adjustment whereby the functions of the spiritual and the civil powers are more clearly defined. This adjustment is made in accordance with the form or type of civil Government.

In the United States, the Catholic Church and Government, both Federal, State and local, have dwelt in peace and amity. Our American Constitution guarantees liberty of religious profession as it guarantees liberty of speech and assembly, of the press and of politics. And the American Catholic Church, composed of Americans who are citizens, has cooperated with the American Government and not only functioned but flourished under the American system of democracy. Whatever differences there have been between the Catholic Church and the American Government have been settled under the authority of the American Constitution and by American judicial tribunals.

THE ATTITUDE AND PRACTICE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In other countries where democracy does not flourish, there have been fundamental, essential differences. What, then, is the attitude and practice of the Catholic Church? It is, first of all, the attitude of a peaceful approach. It is that of consultation about the differences that have arisen, of negotiation and of arbitration, and of mutual guarantees. The Catholic Church and the Government draw up a *Concordat*, or

a *Modus Vivendi*, or some such agreement, whereby the relations between Church and State are harmonized, their functions determined, and peace established.

In 1919 there was published a large volume containing the text of the principal Concordats concluded between the Catholic Church and Civil Governments between the years 1098 and 1914. These documents each recall the happy termination of a conflict or the avoidance of an unhappy conflict. They include agreements with the Kings of Spain, Portugal, Austria, Bavaria, etc., in the eighteenth century, the Concordat of Pius VII and Napoleon, those of the nineteenth century with Switzerland, Sardinia, Russia, Austria and the South American Republics. After the World War, when Europe was re-shaped and new Governments were in power, there was found need for clearer understanding between the Church and State. Under the present Pope, Pius XI, about twenty Agreements have been signed, among them, a Concordat with Latvia in 1922, with Bavaria in 1925, with Poland the same year, two agreements with France in 1926, a Concordat with Lithuania in 1927, a *Modus Vivendi* with Czechoslovakia in 1928, two Conventions with Portugal in 1928-29, the Treaty and Concordat with Italy in 1929, with Roumania and Prussia in the same year, with Germany in 1933, with Austria in 1934.

You have heard it said that the Catholic Church attempts to dominate the Civil Government. I say to you that the Civil Government is more prone to attempt to dominate the Catholic Church. You may believe that the Catholic Church seeks to seize the things that belong to Cæsar and Government. I ask you to believe that Cæsar and Government, with armed power, and might, seeks to seize the things that are God's. The Catholic Church at the present time is in conflict with many Governments, but it is in conflict with no Government that is a democracy and that

guarantees to its citizens the fundamental liberties that are inalienable to the individual.

The Catholic Church has no quarrel with the United States, nor with Great Britain, nor with any of the nations included in the British Commonwealth, Australia, Canada, Ireland, nor with France. The conflict of the Catholic Church today is the same conflict of democracies with dictatorships. And where there is conflict between Church and State, in the nations of today, the fault lies squarely with the Authoritarian State.

Italy is a Fascist dictatorship. That it is Fascist is the problem of the Italian subjects, not of the Catholic Church or of the Pope. It is no more the problem of the Catholic Church than that the United States is a democracy. The Fascism of Italy is a matter that belongs to Cæsar. But Italian Fascism has recognized the place of God in its regime, and permits the free exercise of religion within its realm, of the Protestant and the Jewish and the Catholic religion, to which the vast majority belong.

Germany is a Nazi dictatorship. Nazi-ism is the problem of the German people, and its disease. It is not the problem of the Church, except in so far as Nazi-ism invades the spiritual supremacy of the Church. The liberty of the press, of speech, of politics is a civil matter; that belongs to Cæsar. The liberty of worshipping God according to one's conscience, that belongs to God. The Nazi dictatorship that creates an idolatry for the State and its Fuehrer, that suppresses the free exercise of religious worship, that poisons the minds of the people against religious belief, that criminally blackens the reputation of religious teachers, that forbids the preaching of the Gospel, that steals away the morals of the youth and forces paganism into their young minds, these are the invasions of Cæsar against God, and these must be resisted by the Church and all its members, even unto death.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND THE COMMUNIST STATE

The major conflict between the Church and State in our contemporary world is taking place in the three Communist States, Russia, Mexico and Loyalist Spain. For the first time in Christian history, a Government has been erected on the principle of atheism. Marx, Lenin and Stalin, God-haters, reject all religion and all Divine aspirations. They have laid waste the churches, they have reared the new generation in atheism, they have penalized the worshipers, they have banned religious observance.

Mexico, that strange, weird Fascist form of Communism, has attempted, likewise, to kill God in the hearts of its people. It has closed the churches and scattered the congregations, it has ridiculed God in its schoolbooks and inculcated immorality in the souls of its pupils, it has exiled its priests and executed them.

Spain fell under the domination of a group of men that had learned their God-hate from Soviet Russia. They vented their fury on the edifices raised to the glory of God and on the bodies of men and women dedicated to God. They left in their wake desecrated altars, shrines in ruins, sacred images mutilated, nuns violated, priests murdered in cold blood, lay folk slaughtered. These crimes were committed not only by irresponsible fanatics and madmen but also with the connivance of and by the direct action of a Government that misrepresented the will of the Spanish people.

In Germany and Austria, in Russia, Mexico and Loyalist Spain, the Church is being trampled upon by irreligious dictatorships. What is the attitude of organized religion in these countries? Resistance by all spiritual means. Protest by all legitimate means. Prayer that God might save His people. And Martyrdom, death in defense of God, when all other means fail.

The attitude of the Catholic Church toward Government is that of cooperation and close alliance for the common good of the individuals under Government and of society as a whole. But the Catholic Church, asserting that it is a spiritual society, demands full liberty in the exercise of the functions necessary to conduct itself according to its Divine mission as a spiritual society. The Catholic Church has no desire, no aspiration to invade the realm of civil society.

The Catholic Church has flourished in every democracy. It is at peace with its neighboring churches in the United States and at peace with the Government, duly elected, of the United States. It prays only that Democracy may be preserved in all its vigor in our country.

In conclusion, I leave one pertinent thought with you. Every Government that attacks and suppresses the Catholic Church at the very same time attacks the inalienable *civil* rights of its people and suppresses their fundamental liberties.

The Catholic Theory of the State

WILFRID PARSONS, S.J.

Reprinted from Catholic Action, issue of March, 1938

I. SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT

1. *The Natural Law of Society.* The nature of man is the work of a Higher Being, the Creator, God. From this nature we ascertain the will of Nature's God, man's destiny, his rights and duties. These have value only as they are discovered in man's nature by our reason, fortified by Divine Revelation in the Scriptures and Tradition. For if they are in man's nature, they could have been put there only by the Creator.

Now among the things we discover that God put in man's nature is that he was destined to live in society. Peace and order among men can exist only if all families are organized in a greater union. In this each family yields the exercise of some of its rights, so that all can enjoy what each has a right to enjoy, without any fear that it would be taken away from him. This urge to live in society is a fundamental postulate implanted by God, the Creator.

2. *The Natural Law of Government.* In such a society so constituted there lies necessarily the idea of authority. This authority first of all belongs to society itself, as a necessary part of its nature, for society must have the right to compel its members to respect the purposes for which society was formed.

Society, however, cannot exercise this authority of and by itself. The machinery would be too unwieldy and would break of its own weight. It is natural, therefore, that there be a custodian and protector of the rights and duties of the members of society; in other words, that there be a government, with authority and the power to make that authority respected. This government, therefore, acts as the representative of society as a whole. It, therefore, derives its powers from the nature of society and of man, and therefore ultimately from God, the Creator.

3. *The Origin of Governments.* The ruler who exercises this authority does not derive his powers *directly* from God, but from the people. Each people has the natural right to choose the form of government which it deems best for its general purposes—whether this be a monarchy, an aristocracy, or a republic—and it has the right to designate those who will hold the authority in the government. In every case the authority has been transmitted from God by the people to the man or group whom they designate as their rulers.

Hence it is according to the Catholic concept that

"governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed"; but it is also true that these just powers are also *ultimately* derived from God. This is true because it was in the law of man's nature that it be so; and therefore it was in the law of Nature's God.

4. *The Duty of Citizens.* The authority exercised by governments is expressed by Law. "Authority is written out in a code of laws, so that the citizens may know beforehand what they are obliged to do, and if they are accused of violating it, there may be a written record before the court of what they were supposed to do or not to do."

In obeying these laws, however, which every citizen is obliged to do by the law of nature, he is not obeying man, but God. No man has of himself the sole right to bind my actions. "If I thought that I was doing homage to some man or group of men when I have to obey a law, I would not obey it." The modern theory that laws emanate ultimately only from society, that is, from man, is destructive of man's nature.

5. *The Duties of Rulers.* "No man or group of men has the right to coerce me, to restrict my liberty. Only my Creator can grant that right." Hence the authority that is granted rulers over men may not be abused. There are limitations on that authority, and these limitations, too, come from God. They are the limitations that come from that same natural law which formed society, set up governments, and gave rulers the power to govern.

Now it is true that governments have what is called true sovereignty; they have the right to bind the consciences of the members of the society over which they are placed, and to punish them if they do not obey. But this, too, does not come from any *direct* grant to them from God, but immediately from society itself, and there *ultimately* from God. "We must obey the authority conferred by the people on governments, but

only because the people had that authority from God. If it came from man alone, it would be a usurpation and an injustice. It is because it comes from God that we obey, not for any other reason."

N. B. This Catholic concept is denied by all those who deny that man has a Creator, and that there is therefore a natural law. These hold that authority originates solely from society, that is, from man. It is obvious that this theory puts man at the mercy of human wills and whims and is destructive of human liberty. It has resulted in modern times in both Communism and Fascism.

II. THE INDIVIDUAL AND GOVERNMENT

1. *Limitations on Authority.* These limitations are, as the Declaration of Independence puts it, the "unalienable rights" with which "man is endowed by his Creator." They are contained in the same natural law which deposits authority in society and thus in governments, and they act as curbs on that authority. In fact, the chief purpose of that authority is to protect the inalienable rights of the individual. Thus without authority there would be no liberty, for uncurbed individual claims would encroach on the rights of everybody else. Authority, therefore, exists primarily for the preservation of liberty.

The first liberty enjoyed by peoples is that of choosing the form of government which they deem best for them. This involves the right to throw off the domination of a foreign power, when a people has resolved on self-government. This first limitation on authority is fundamental, and involves the actual right of a people to govern itself.

2. *Limitations by Constitution.* The second limitation to which a people has a right is to transmit to its government just so much authority as it means it to exercise and no more. This is usually done by a Constitution, by which certain powers are delegated to a

central authority and the rest reserved. The American Constitution is an example of such limited delegation of powers. In England the Constitution is fluid: the representatives of the people in Parliament determine from year to year what rights to rule they shall possess, and if these representatives do not express the mind of the people at a given time, the people recall them in an election.

3. *Limitation by Self-Government.* If the people choose, they can refuse to delegate all their powers to one central authority, or absolute monarch, and decide to exercise them themselves, either directly as in a pure democracy (as in ancient Athens), or by a representative democracy, as in France, England, or the United States. This will be considered in the next section.

4. *Limitation by Natural Law.* In this country, as in the Middle Ages generally, it has been held that the principal limitation on authority is by natural law, through those inalienable rights with which man is endowed by his Creator. These are rights which are not the grant of any government or even of a Constitution; or of any human institution. They come from God alone. They antedate any state or government, and are merely guaranteed by the State, not granted by it.

The denial of this fundamental religious proposition on which the American system is founded necessarily leads to tyranny. If rights are the grant of any parliament, then that parliament may take away what it freely gave. This is denied by those who do not believe that we have a Creator, or that we have been endowed with rights by that Creator. They thus deny the fundamental principle on which our American Commonwealth is founded. They thus destroy the only bulwark of liberty, and hand us over to the mercy of any group of men who control the government. (Cf. *God and Governments*, pp. 15-18).

5. *Conclusion.* The only possible protection

Now among the things we discover that God put in man's nature is that he was destined to live in society. Peace and order among men can exist only if all families are organized in a greater union. In this each family yields the exercise of some of its rights, so that all can enjoy what each has a right to enjoy, without any fear that it would be taken away from him. This urge to live in society is a fundamental postulate implanted by God, the Creator.

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central authority and the rest reserved. The American Constitution is an example of such limited delegation of powers. In England the Constitution is fluid: the representatives of the people in Parliament determine from year to year what rights to rule they shall possess, and if these representatives do not express the mind of the people at a given time, the people recall them in an election.

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against the tyranny of a totalitarian state, Fascist or Communist, lies in this Catholic concept of the natural law. By placing the source of man's rights in society alone, and not in man's nature as created by God, it is possible for governments to impose most complete tyranny on men. It is worthy of note that many American writers who are neither Fascist nor Communist, but who do not believe in God, hold theories about political liberty that lead straight and logically to dictatorship.

III. SOCIETY AND SELF-GOVERNMENT

1. *The Dilemma of Authority and Liberty.* The everlasting problem of government has always been to reconcile the apparently conflicting natural rights of authority and liberty. Society has constantly been veering between one and the other. Particularly in hard times the urge for economic security of the individual and the family instinctively drives people to seek security at the expense of liberty. At other times liberty is sought primarily, and frequently at the expense of the economic security of the masses. At those times liberty becomes the freedom of the strong to amass wealth unhindered by the state or the common good.

2. *Democracy as the Way Out.* The idea of democracy is that both liberty and authority are best obtained at the same time when the people govern themselves through their elected representatives. Authority is secured by placing true sovereignty in Federal and state government, so that the citizen has a Divinely imposed duty to obey it. Liberty is secured by making the government responsible to the citizens, who have the right to recall their representatives by the ballot when they no longer represent their mind.

The American democracy imposes a further check on authority in the name of liberty by a twofold division of power. First, only certain powers are dele-

gated to the central or Federal Government; the rest are reserved to local governments. Secondly, the Federal Government itself is a threefold instrument, in which the legislative, executive, and judicial powers of government are placed in three different bodies, each one a check on the other. This system is considered to be the ideal way to conciliate the apparently conflicting rights of liberty and authority.

3. *The Protection of Democracy.* Even this mechanical bulwark of liberty, however, will not endure unless the fundamental principles on which it was founded are preserved. The denial of God, the Creator; of Divine law and the natural law which is the Divine law in men; and of inalienable rights which flow from this natural law, must necessarily destroy democracy. Thus only a religious affirmation can avail to retain even the form of democracy and its ensuing protection of human liberty. This religious affirmation is summed up in present times by Pope Pius XI in the concept of Christ the King, as the Protector of human rights against the encroachments of tyrannous government.

Lourdes the Miraculous

JOHN P. DELANEY, S.J.

A FRIEND wrote to me from Lourdes a postal card fairly exploding with awe, reverence, enthusiasm. "It is the most sublime spot in the world," he wrote. "If you ever come, plan to spend at least a month. Anything less is too short." I attributed the excessive enthusiasm to an impressionable temperament, and when I too found it possible to visit Lourdes, I planned to stay but one day. That one day had become two, three, four, when I finally tore myself away.

Had I a month at my disposal, I would gladly have spent it there. Lourdes really is impressive, strangely gripping.

But what is the miracle of Lourdes? Not the astounding cure of incurables, the supernatural recovery of men and women definitely given over to death's hands. Such miracles are rare. One might make many a yearly pilgrimage to Lourdes and never be privileged to witness a really startling cure. Yet, they still occur, year after year, and the records are there for all to see, stern, undeniable, and among those who return year after year to tend the sick, to carry the stretchers, to help in the baths, are men and women who first came themselves on stretchers, beyond the help of doctors.

Beyond these there are miracles that reveal themselves to all visitors. One of them is the prayer of Lourdes. What is it that forces those who come merely out of curiosity to pray with an intensity never known before? The very crowds have only the effect of rendering a man less conscious of crowds. At Lourdes in the midst of thousands men and women act as though they were alone with Christ and His Mother. All self-consciousness, all fear of prying eyes, mocking eyes, vanishes. Men and women, old and young, of every nation, every class, kneel and reverently kiss the ground before the Grotto. It is holy ground, and their act of reverence is no more astonishing than the story history books tell of Columbus falling on his knees as soon as he set foot on the soil of the New World. They kneel with arms outstretched, as they tell us the Saints prayed, and recite Our Lady's rosary before the spot where Our Lady appeared to Bernadette. The rosary is seldom out of anyone's hands. The pilgrimage recites it in a body. A private pilgrimage of twenty or thirty takes its own special post, and the rosary begins. Small groups of two or three walk about, kneel, rosary in hand, and the Hail Mary rises in a constant

murmur on all sides in French, in English, Spanish, Latin, every language of Europe. It takes the place of conversation among friends. The lonely visitor fingers his beads, frowning as he walks, and watches and wonders what strange power is working on him, forcing him to pray.

And the fervor, yes, the fierceness of prayer at Lourdes! While the sick are being wheeled one by one into the baths, again when the Blessed Sacrament goes slowly about the square before the Basilica, raised in endless blessings over rows on rows of sick and maimed and crippled, the priest leads the prayers and the people respond. Lord, that I may see! Lord, that I may walk! Lord, perform a miracle! St. Bernadette, pray for us. Our Lady of Lourdes, pray for us, over and over again, and the voices rise in an intensity and earnestness, all most vicious. They seem to be forcing the Lord and His Mother to listen even against their wills, seem to be tearing the answer to prayer out of the Heart of Christ. I watched one nurse kneeling among the stretchers, her arms stretched out, her face tense, concentrated with the fervor of her prayer, and the words came out with the explosive force of machine-gun fire. You wonder how such prayer could go unanswered! Like children they are, tugging at an inattentive mother's apron strings, beating their little fists, stamping their feet. Like fierce, insistent pounding on a locked door, those prayers beat against the heavens. One non-Catholic listening to them remembered that the Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and only the violent bear it away. Listening to it all, you feel very, very keenly as though you had never prayed in all your life.

What, then, of all those prayers that do seem to go unanswered? You know as you watch that some of those people lying helpless on the stretchers have saved and planned and dreamed of this pilgrimage for long, weary, hopeless years. Now at last the great moment

has come. They are actually at Lourdes. They are wheeled to Mass at the Grotto. But miracles seldom take place then. They are wheeled to the baths to the accompaniment of the prayers of strangers and friends. And still they cannot move on their stretchers! They are wheeled beneath the shade of trees in the immense square before the Basilica. The procession starts. The Blessed Sacrament is approaching. Now, if ever, is the time for the miracle! Ringing in their ears—Lord, perform a miracle; Lord, that I may see; Lord, he whom thou lovest is sick! Christ Himself is lifted in blessing above them. They look up to Him in hope. Christ moves on again, and they still lie stricken on their stretchers! What of them? Are they disappointed? Bitter perhaps? Do they feel that their prayers have gone unanswered? Every visitor to Lourdes asks the question. I asked it of doctors, of officials who have been serving the sick for years, of priests who have accompanied fifteen, twenty pilgrimages and have heard the secrets of the sick. And the answer was always the same: "No, they are not at all disappointed. They all feel that their prayers have been answered. They have been strengthened. It is actually a fact that they would rather see someone else cured than themselves. And they return home resigned, happy, even grateful." And it is a strange thing that here at Lourdes, surrounded by the most poignant misery and suffering of the world, there is none of the despair, none of the depressed feeling that so often weighs upon visitors to hospital wards. I looked closely into the faces of the sick—pitiful faces, many of them—as they were wheeled by, and there was only peace, a certain quiet saintliness in every face. It was as though here at least—perhaps only for a while—suffering is understood. You can almost glimpse the mystical badge of honor on every sufferer's breast, see Christ in every suffering face.

In other ways the daily miracle of Lourdes is even

more tangible. Never a disinfectant is used in the hospitals, and though diseases of every sort are gathered there, sometimes to the number of fifteen hundred at a time, there has never been an epidemic at Lourdes, no one has ever fallen victim to a contagious disease. "Here," as one attendant expressed it, "the microbes know their place." The baths above all are inexplicable. Not only the cures that take place in them from time to time, but the daily routine. The water is cold, bitterly cold. Yet aged and rheumatics and people of weak hearts and tuberculars are laid in the water, rest there while the prayers are recited, then are dressed or bundled into their blankets untowelled, and no one has ever suffered from the immersion. On the day of my visit a charming Irish gentleman was on duty in the baths—slim, grey-bearded, soft-spoken, with keen, kindly blue eyes. For fourteen years he has been coming to Lourdes. University graduate, polished gentleman, he spends four months of every year lifting every type of diseased manhood into the baths for four or five hours a day. Hard work? He smiled. "Sometimes, but a privilege." And he meant it. He went on to explain another remarkable thing. The water in the baths is seldom changed. Men with open running sores, ulcers, hideous skin diseases, strong healthy people, all take their places in the baths; and again no one has ever suffered from what should be foul water. "At the end of the day," he concluded with a simplicity that cannot be reproduced, "we take a bath ourselves and then we drink a cup of the water!" He smiled at my almost horrified astonishment and freely admitted that at first it was a bitter struggle to down this water. And even since his first victory it has not always been easy, as on the day he had to dip one man whose body was such a mass of running sores that it took two hours to rebandage him. "Drinking the water after that was not really easy, but if we did not drink it, we probably would not be back the next year." He did

not expand that remark, but it might have two meanings. If they had not the faith to drink that water, they might not have the faith and courage to carry on a task very disagreeable and laborious. Another meaning might have reference to the extremely high standard demanded of these men who are allowed to help Christ's suffering ones. Many of them come from the finest families in Europe, but that counts less than their faith and devotion, and it is highly probable that, if a man's faith weakened before this test, he might not be invited to return. As we finished speaking, his fingers were reaching for the little cup on a shelf. There were two of us there, both priests. And he had spoken with such a simplicity of faith! "A test of faith?" I asked my companion. He nodded and rather gingerly, I admit, we drank a cup of the water in which the sick had been bathing. Our appetites did not and have not suffered.

Such is Lourdes, yet only a small part of Lourdes. It is a holy place, a place of prayer, but only of the most solid, essential kind. The prayer of Lourdes centers about the Blessed Sacrament and the Mother of God. It is linked with suffering and with penance. The road up the long, steep Calvary is kept purposely rough and stony; yet tottering old men and women toil its height day after day, and not a few, young and old, make the journey barefooted. The pilgrimage regime of prayer is a heavy one, yet few are satisfied to say but the prayers of the pilgrimage. The space before the grotto is always crowded; and whatever may have been the visitor's intention he seems to gravitate all unconsciously towards the spot between the Grotto and the river.

When the day of pilgrimage is over, and far into the night you lie awake while the Ave, Ave, Ave Maria runs and rings in your mind, you know what Lourdes means to all these pilgrims. It means the pride of faith, the humility of faith!